

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
Planning Commission Members
FROM: Paul Kenaga, Building Official/Zoning Administrator
DATE: August 13th, 2013
RE: Planning Commission Minutes

The Planning Commission met at 5:15 p.m., on Tuesday, July 30th 2013, in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. The following members were present: Don Smith, Jerry Steffes, Linda Larson, Richard Wieser, Dave Hanifl and Ex-officio members John Graf and Shawn Wetterlin. Ex-officio member Bill Waller was not present and Planning Members Earl Welch and Randy Corcoran were not present. Paul Kenaga was also in attendance

1. Meeting was called to order by Chairman Smith and roll call taken. The minutes of June 4th 2013, were approved as written by the consensus of the Planning Commission.
2. The Planning Commission had discussion concerning Electronic Billboards’.

Motion by Hanifl, seconded by Larson to send the Planning Commission’s determination on electronic billboards (off premise signs) to the City Attorney for concurrence. Provided the City attorney agrees with the determination the planning commission will seek direction from the City Council. Provided as reference is SECTION VI ALLOWED SIGNS-Permit Required B. 6. Off-Premises Signs. [See attached section from the Sign Ordinance No 214].

The Planning Commission believes:

- Electronic Billboards’ are permitted ‘off premise signs’ in the current La Crescent Sign Ordinance.
- There are not regulation in the La Crescent Sign Ordinance specific to Electronic Billboards’. There is language restricting billboards (off premise signs) in general.
- The only regulation for Electronic Billboards’ is language that refers to an obligation to meet “general sign standards” and a prohibition of “flashing or animated” signs. There are no standards specific to electronic billboards. Such topics as ‘dwell’ and ‘intensity’ are often covered, in detail, in Sign Ordinances, including, in some communities, prohibition of electronic billboards.

Questions to the City Council:

- Do we want to prohibit or limit electronic billboards (off premise signs)? In some Cities off premise electronic billboards (often call EMU, electronic message units) are permitted with the removal of a specific number of exiting billboards.

- If permitted should La Crescent have detailed regulation of off premise Electronic Billboards’?

Further the Planning Commission discussed two other amendments to the ordinance:

1. Making VI. A. 1. Central Business District Language consistent with the zoning ordinance.
2. Deleting the second sentence in VI. B. 6. b. “They may also be replaced if they are required to be removed by a governmental agency or by the owner of the property”.

3. The Planning Commission had discussion concerning “The Small Cities Grant Program.” This program is administered by the State of Minnesota with Federal HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.

The City of La Crescent has a LMI (Low to Moderate Income) population of only 30%. In comparison to other communities this is a notably low percentage and funding is restricted to benefit LMI. We examined several options form funding: Community Centers; Downtown redevelopment; Removal of Blight; home mortgage assistance; and the home rehabilitation in which we previously participated. In order to have a competitive application we are limited to the home rehabilitation program. Michelle Vrieze will be contacted to ask for a proposal to complete an application for 2014 funding. This will be discussed at the next meeting and a recommendation forwarded to the Council.

4. The Planning Commission was informed of the City Attorney’s opinion of conveyance of “public land” to a private party without public bid.

1. It is permitted through a public process.
2. The intended use must be consistent with the “Comprehensive Plan.”
3. The Planning Commission is responsible for an advisory opinion.
4. City Council must wait up to 45 days for that opinion.

5. The Planning Commission was updated concerning “Senior Housing”.

Conversation was started in 2011 with educational presentations to the Planning Commission. The presentations were well attended by the Public and covered various types of senior housing and ownership models. In 2012 a committee was formed including the Mayor, Planning Commission, and representatives from the Blandin Leadership Group. 11 different vendors of Senior Housing were contacted and asked if they would like to work with the City to further develop senior housing options. A subcommittee was formed and a first meeting held with each of 4 groups that indicated an initial interest. 2 indicated 'timing issues'. Of the two remaining vendors of senior housing one continued conversation and study for the following year.

That vendor is having continual conversation with the City of La Crescent (subcommittee) and it is likely that a proposal will be forthcoming in the fall.

6. Dick Wieser gave an update concerning a Community Center Complex that that he and a committee isf working on. The hope is to build the complex through donations, estimated cost to be 1.5 – 2.0 million dollars. The complex will be chartered as a tax-free entity.

7. It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to change the Planning Commission Regular Meeting to Tuesday, September 17, 2013 at 5:15 P.M.

8. There being no further business to discuss, motion by Wieser, seconded by Steffes to adjourn the meeting. This was at approximately 6:50 p.m.

Motion approved by the consensus of the Planning Commission.

Saved as minutes of July 30th, 2013 Planning Commission.